

# STD PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP NEWS

*founded in 1992 to promote strategies to reduce the incidence and impact of STDs through support and encouragement of partnerships among private, voluntary, and public sectors*

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## **Winter meeting focuses on increased STDs/risk behaviors in MSMs**

After declines in STDs among men who have sex with men (MSM) in the late 1980s, rates have been on the rise over the last couple of years. Dr. Christopher Iverson from the CDC discussed these and related trends with the STD Prevention Partnership at its winter meeting this past January 2001. Ms. Catalina Sol from Clinica del Pueblo, a multi-service community health center discussed some of the barriers at a community level in reaching one part of the population impacted by these trends.

CDC recently released data further demonstrating reason for concern about STDs in MSMs. It is well documented that the presence of STDs increases both the ability to become infected and to infect others with HIV. Similar to a number of communities around the country, California recently experienced a syphilis outbreak among MSM where there was a 150% increase in syphilis cases among MSM between 1999 and 2000. Sixty percent of those infected with syphilis were also HIV positive. They also reported high levels of risk behavior including:

- S 50% reported anonymous sex
- S 28% reported meeting partners at bathhouses
- S Only 20% reported using a condom during their last sexual encounter
- S 40% used illicit drugs

These trends follow a period of decline in STDs among MSM in the late 1980s which was presumably due to widespread behavior change related the the HIV epidemic.

CDC plans several responses to these newly recognized challenges:

1. A report from an expert consultation on the topic will soon be released (pending approval from the administration) and will include a qualitative summary of STD/HIV behavioral & epidemiological trends.
2. A public health alert including some technical guidance will be published and sent to public/ private organizations serving the MSM population.
3. Regional trainings or seminars will be conducted which focus on "how-to" improve HIV/STD services for MSM.

While such written documents and trainings are important, barriers to reaching populations still exist. Ms. Sol focused her comments on Central American immigrants, a population in which MSMs do not self-identify with that label and thus must be reached through culturally acceptable means. She also discussed physical access to care barriers faced by this population. Furthermore, this population tends not to trust people in positions of authority unless a trusting relationship has already been established.

Clearly, public awareness and strategy-building is important to address this changing public health trend. However, overcoming general barriers to reaching specific populations will always be required for the information to make any difference.

CDC documents addressing the rising rates of STDs in MSMs will be made available to Partnership members as soon as they are released.

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## Partnership meeting offers opportunity to discuss member involvement in STD prevention

Sharing information about member activities is part of each Partnership meeting agenda. Following are some of what was shared:

### **National Education Association - Health Information Network**

published a colorful 2-page document "Sexual Health: The Role of School Personnel." For more information, call 202-822-7570 or visit:

[www.neahin.org](http://www.neahin.org)

### **Global Campaign for Microbicides**

distributed summary of legislative accomplishments and policy developments related to microbicides in FY2001. For more information, call 301-642-8701 or write to:

[mgottem@womenexchange.org](mailto:mgottem@womenexchange.org)

**Advocates for Youth** has been advocating against legislation related to abstinence-only sex education, which was again funded for the current fiscal year. AFY called on the new Congress to rescind the \$250 million in federal funds allocated to abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and to redirect the funding to programs that are scientifically proven to reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS and other STDs.

**American Academy of Pediatrics** will offer CME courses on diagnosis and management of STDs at its national meeting this fall.

**Health Resources and Services Administration** has recently drafted a national plan to implement syphilis elimination efforts. They have engaged in a project called CHORES (Community Health Outreach Educational Services Project) which is intended to support efforts to eliminate syphilis and other health disparities. It is a collaborative effort among community health centers, community action agencies, and local health departments to coordinate provision of health and social services

through improved community outreach and access to primary health care.

**Planned Parenthood Federation of America** has a special webpage for teens called teenwire that includes educational materials related to sexual health. Visit:

[www.teenwire.com](http://www.teenwire.com)

Visit the Partnership website at:

[www.cdc.gov/nchstp/dstd/partnership\\_dir.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/dstd/partnership_dir.htm) to access more information about member organizations.

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## Partnership selects new steering committee

Every year, the Partnership elects new steering committee members. Last January, the following persons were elected to begin new terms:

Debbie Coleman, American Nurses Association (Co-Chairperson)

Michael McGee, Planned Parenthood Federation of America (Co-Chairperson)

Gale Burstein, American Academy of Pediatrics

Lynette Gueits, National Council of La Raza

Charlie Rabins, National Coalition of STD Directors

Continuing on the Steering Committee are:

Megan Gottemoeller, Global Campaign for Microbicides

Terry Hogan, National Network of STD/HIV Prevention Training Centers

Bernice Humphrey, Girls Inc.

Judy Lipshutz, CDC

Special thanks are owed to those whose steering committee terms ended with the winter meeting: Frank Beadle de Palomo (Academy for Educational Development), Ruth Roman (National Council of La Raza), and Kent Klindera (Advocates for Youth).

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For more information, visit website (above) or write to [jel6@cdc.gov](mailto:jel6@cdc.gov)